ED 336 176 PS 019 534

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TITLE School-Age Child Care in America: Findings of a 1988 Study. Action Research Paper #3.
INSTITUTION Wellesley Coll., Mass. Center for Research on Women.
SPONS AGENCY Smith Richardson Foundation, Inc., Greensboro, N.C.
PUB DATE Aug 90
NOTE 39p.; For complete design and analysis of the provider survey summarized in this paper, see ED 320 671.
AVAILABLE FROM School-Age Child Care Project, Wellesley College, Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA 02181 ($6.00, plus $3.00 postage and handling. Discount on orders of 20 or more copies).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *After School Programs; Child Caregivers; *Day Care Centers; Elementary Education; Elementary School Students; *Enrollment; National Surveys; Program Costs; Public Schools; *School Age Day Care; *State Departments of Education; Tables (Data); Teacher Student Ratio
IDENTIFIERS *Day Care Licensing; State Regulation

ABSTRACT

This study attempted to determine the number of school-age child-care programs operating in the United States and to assess the quality of the programs. The first issue was addressed through a survey of state child care licensing agencies and departments of education; the second, through a survey of child care providers. The first survey determined that: (1) few states could give definite numbers on licensed centers; (2) caregiver-child ratios for 6-year-olds ranged from 1:10 to 1:26; (3) more than half the states had adapted or were adapting child care regulations to take into account the needs of school-age children; (4) most states exempted school-run programs from licensing; and (5) twenty-five education departments were able to estimate the enrollment capacities of programs run by the public schools in their states. The second survey determined that: (1) programs had been running for an average of 7 years; (2) the caregiver-child ratio averaged 1:12.5; (3) the average fee for after-school care was $26.52 per child per week; (4) the hourly wage of teachers averaged $6.95 per hour; (5) formal certification for teachers was required by 82 percent of public school programs; and (6) public schools were the most frequently used facility for school-age child care. (BC)

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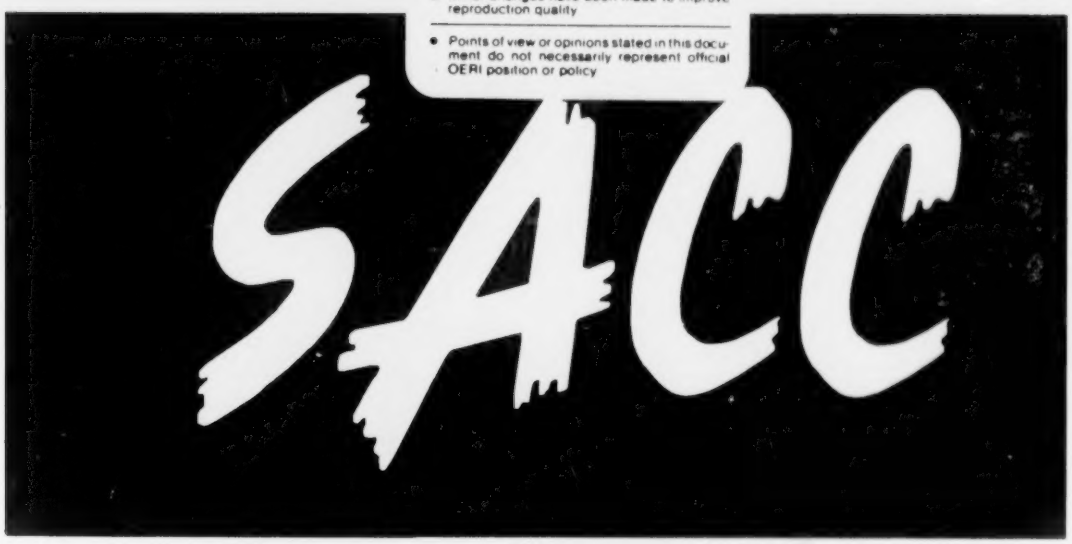

School-Age Child Care in America: Findings of a 1988 Study

Dale Borman Fink

Action Research Paper #3

School-Age Child Care Project
Wellesley College Center for Research on Women

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School-Age Child Care in America: Findings of a 1988 Study

Dale Borman Fink

ACTION RESEARCH PAPER #3
August 1990

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Acknowledgements

Design and analysis of the provider survey which makes up the second half of this paper was the work of Fern Marx, a colleague at the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. A complete version of that analysis, "School-Age Child Care in America: Final Report of a National Provider Survey," is available from the Center for Research on Women. Michelle Seligson, director of the center's School-Age Child Care Project, gave leadership and consultation, and conducted many interviews with respondents in the field. Funding was provided by the Smith Richardson Foundation, which we would like to thank for its support.

Lynn Hatch, research administrator of the School-Age Child Care Project, assisted with interviews of respondents. Wellesley students (now alumnae) Laurie Demit and Jennifer Patton gathered material from state child-care licensing agencies and education departments. Rich Scofield, of *School Age Notes* in Nashville, Tennessee, made available his mailing lists, from which we solicited volunteers for the provider survey. Tim Monaghan edited the final version of this paper.

The biggest thanks go to those who completed the surveys, answered our questions, and gave us the most complete picture that exists to date of school-age child care in America.

Dale Borman Fink, July 1990

About the Author

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INTRODUCTION

"How many school-age child-care programs are there in the United States, and how many children attend them?"

This question has been asked by many people over the past few years, but cannot yet be answered. Although school-age child care has been on the public policy agenda at all levels over the last decade, most states have no information on the numbers of either programs or children attending them.

"What is the overall quality of American school-age child-care programs?" The answer to this question is equally elusive. The wide diversity of program structure, philosophy and location makes any conclusion highly speculative.

In 1988 the Wellesley College School-Age Child Care Project undertook a year-long investigation to learn as much as possible about the supply and quality of center-based school-age child care in the United States.

Research about supply was "from the top down." We asked child-care licensing agencies and departments of education for the numbers of programs in their states serving school-age children before and after school, for the approximate numbers of children served, and about the standards and regulations applied to the programs.

Research about quality was "from the bottom up." We took a national sample of school-age child-care providers in six geographic areas, and asked for detailed information about nearly every aspect of their programs. Although we could not draw conclusions about the overall quality of programs, we were able to get a large amount of self-descriptive information about 130 programs, covering physical facilities, program content, staffing patterns, staff qualifications, wages and benefits, evaluation procedures, parent fees, and many other topics.

Our findings, despite many gaps, provide the most comprehensive picture to date of school-age child care in the United States. In 1992, the U.S. Department of Education will have concluded a study of 1,300 nationally representative before- and after-school programs. This will be the first study of school-age child care undertaken by the U.S. government. RMC Research Corporation, Mathematica Policy Research and the Wellesley School-Age Child Care Project are conducting the study.

Since our surveys of the states and providers were like two snapshots taken from completely different perspectives, with very few points of intersection, they are presented here independently. At a couple of points in this research paper (for

instance, in the discussion of staff/child ratios), there is a direct connection between data from the states and the providers. But in the main, the "top-down" and "bottom-up" phases of the research are discussed separately.

HIGHLIGHTS OF FINDINGS

FROM THE STATES

■ Only four state child-care licensing agencies -- in Ohio, New Hampshire, Vermont, and South Dakota -- were able to fully report the numbers of licensed center-based school-age child-care programs and their licensed capacity.

■ There were five states with separate regulations for school-age child care as distinct from group day care for younger children. These were California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New York, and North Carolina. There were 18 other states which had made significant regulatory adaptations for school-age child care.

■ The care-giving ratios mandated by states for 6-year-olds ranged from 1:10 in Maine, Montana, and New York, to 1:26 in Texas. There were 17 states besides Texas with ratio requirements of 1:20 or lower.

■ All but 11 states exempted public school-run programs from licensing. A few states also exempted other public entities (e.g. municipalities) and groups such as the Girl Scouts, the YMCA and YWCA. Many states exempted private and religious schools.

■ Licensing officials in 22 states said that there was confusion in some cases about whether programs were subject to licensing. Most commonly, the confusion centered on recreational programs, summer camps and school vacation-week activities.

■ Twenty-five education departments were able to estimate the enrollment capacities of programs run by the public schools in their states. Of these, Florida's schools provided the most care, with an estimated enrollment of 34,000 in 488 schools spread over 37 school districts.

■ Twenty state education departments were able to estimate the enrollment capacities of programs operating as partnerships, where third parties provided care using school facilities. Of these, Tennessee's schools served the largest number of children, with an estimated enrollment of 7,721. The state with the most schools providing space for partnership programs was Connecticut, with some 179 schools participating.

FROM THE PROVIDERS

■ Forty-four percent of the sample began offering school-age child care after 1984, as opposed to 55 percent of the public school-run programs. On average, programs had been running for seven years at the time of the survey.

■ Eighty-one percent of the sample provided year-round care.

■ Seventy-five percent of the sample provided both before- and after-school care.

■ The vast majority of children attending programs were between the ages of 5 and 9. Even programs serving children through age 12 or higher found that, in the main, enrollment dropped off considerably above age 9.

■ The median licensed capacity was 49. The median number actually enrolled was 50.

■ The mean number of staff employed was 10; the median was seven.

■ Ratios of care-giving staff to children averaged 1:12.5. The YMCA/YWCA programs had the best average ratios by type of organization, at 1:10.2. The Pennsylvania programs in our sample had the lowest average ratios by geographical area, at 1:10.8.

■ The range of fees for after-school care was from $10.00 to $55.00 per week. The average was $26.52 per week for one child, unsubsidized, attending after school five days a week on regular school days. In general, rural program fees were considerably lower than those in urban or suburban areas. The lowest fees by type of organization were those of municipalities (mostly recreation and park departments), at an average of $19.29 per week for after-school care.

■ The hourly wages of teachers averaged $5.97 in rural programs, $7.12 in urban programs, and $7.24 in suburban programs. The overall average was $6.95 an hour. The highest wages by type of organization were those in public school-run programs, where teachers averaged $9.36 an hour. The highest wages by geographical area were those in New Jersey, at an average of $9.51 an hour.

- Formal certification of some kind was required for program teachers by 82 percent of public schools, 58 percent of child-care organizations, and 33 percent of others (religious affiliated, YMCA/YWCA, social agencies, municipalities, universities, and military).

- Staff turnover of at least one in the past year was reported by 85 percent of the sample. Of those providers who reported any turnover, it averaged 40 percent.

- Public schools were the most frequently used facility for school-age child care. Not only did nearly all of the public school-run programs use public school space, but 24 percent of all other programs did as well. The only significant category making no use of public school facilities was that of religious-affiliated programs.

- Remedial education was offered by only 12 percent of the sample, and was more likely to be offered by for-profit child-care organizations. The same was true of tutoring, which was offered by 25 percent of the sample.

- Activities included most frequently by all types of programs were arts and crafts, free time, quiet time, reading, athletics, homework help and field trips.

THE STATE SURVEY

WHAT WE SOUGHT FROM THE STATES

Quantitative information about numbers of programs and children enrolled was a major objective of our "top-down" research. We also wanted qualitative information on the types of regulations applied to programs and the staffing ratios they required, the types of programs subject to or exempt from regulations, and whether there was confusion over which programs were to be regulated.

To obtain this data, we identified two separate and critical sources of information at the state level: licensing agencies and education departments.

We asked licensing agencies about the numbers of licensed programs and children attending. We asked them, if they could, to break down the figures between programs licensed exclusively for school-agers and those licensed for mixed age groups. We also asked about the content of regulations and what categories of programs were exempt from licensing.

From the departments of education, we asked about programs run by public school districts, and programs -- whether run by public schools or not -- housed in public schools.

WHAT THE LICENSING AGENCIES KNEW ABOUT SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE

The information available from licensing agencies varied enormously. It turned out that only a few states could give hard numbers on centers licensed to enroll school-age children, either exclusively or in addition to preschool children. Only four -- New Hampshire, Vermont, Delaware, and Ohio -- could report total licensed capacity for school-age child care, with four others willing to provide estimates.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Out of 40 states and the District of Columbia where licensing of programs

was in effect in 1988, [1] 16 said their child-care licensing departments did not have access to data by age groups served -- at least not at the state level. In many cases, they could cite the total numbers of licensed centers and homes, and statewide enrollment capacities, but these figures included all programs and all children from infancy through school age. [2]

The data from the remaining 24 states was sometimes quite impressive, [3] but did not include the total licensed capacity for school-age child care, except in the instances of the seven states (plus New York City) profiled in the table below.

Table 1: Capacity for licensed school-age child care, 1988
(Only 7 states and New York City responded)

New Hampshire	796 (actual)
Maine	1125 (estimate)
Vermont	1856 (actual)
South Dakota	3503 (actual)
Oregon	6000 (estimate)
Massachusetts	16,594 (estimate)
Ohio	27,037 (actual)
New York City	35,000 (estimate)

(1) There were seven states which did not submit any responses to our survey of child-care licensing agencies; four other states responded but were not in a position to provide much information. The latter included two (Mississippi and New Jersey) which had not yet developed licensing for school-age child care, one (Oklahoma) where almost all school-age child care was exempt, and one (Minnesota) in which licensing of school-age programs had been temporarily suspended in 1988 for the purpose of reviewing and modifying the system.

(2) The states that had no ready access to licensing data by age group served were Alabama, Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, and Washington.

(3) For instance, Virginia reported that 29 centers were licensed exclusively for school-age children, but didn't know the capacity of the centers. Arizona knew they had licensed 104 programs for school-age only, with an estimated capacity of 7,910, but did not have the ability to report capacity for school-age care in other centers serving preschoolers and school-agers. Indiana, similarly, could say there were 3 centers serving 206 children licensed exclusively for school-agers but could not determine the school-age capacity of 351 other centers licensed for preschool and school-age.

STAFFING RATIOS FOR 6-YEAR-OLDS

One important element of program quality which nearly every state addressed was staffing ratios. Here, for the sake of brevity and clarity, we will look only at ratios for 6-year-olds.

In the majority of states, staffing ratios for 6-year-olds were the same as those for 5-year-olds and children several years older than 6. Out of 44 states reporting, however, there were 16 which required higher ratios for 5-year-olds, and nine which allowed lower ratios for older school-agers. Alabama, for instance, required 1:20 for 5-year-olds; 1:22 for 6- and 7-year-olds, and 1:25 for those age 8 and above. Kentucky mandated the same ratio for 5- and 6-year-olds (1:15) but allowed a 1:25 ratio for those age 7 and above, unless the program was running all day, in which case the ratio requirement was 1:20. Michigan required 1:12 for 5-year-olds; 1:20 for 6- to 12-year-olds; and 1:30 for children age 13 and up.

The most stringent ratio requirements were found in Maine, Montana, and New York (city and state), all of which required one care-giver for every 10 6-year-olds. However, under certain circumstances, providers in Maine were allowed to obtain a waiver from this regulation. Montana's providers could raise their ratios to 1:14 when serving children 7 and older. New York's regulations only allowed an easing up to 1:15 when children were 11 (New York City) or 10 (the rest of the state) and older.

At the other end of the spectrum, 18 of the states reporting had minimum ratio requirements for 6-year-olds of 1:20 or worse. Of these, six required only one care-giver for every 25 children, while Texas was unique in requiring only one for every 26.

Table 2: Ratio requirements, care-giver to children, for 6-year-olds, 1988*

Ratio required	States mandating
1:10	Maine, Montana, New York
1:12	Colorado, Idaho, Pennsylvania
1:13	Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont
1:14	California
1:15	Iowa, Kentucky, Minnesota Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon S. Dakota, W. Virginia, Washington
1:16	Kansas, Missouri
1:18	New Hampshire, N. Dakota, Ohio Wisconsin
1:20	Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii Illinois, Indiana, Michigan Nevada, Oklahoma, Virginia, Wyoming
1:25	Delaware, Florida, N. Carolina S. Carolina, Tennessee, Utah
1:26	Texas

* Information not available (besides New Jersey and Mississippi, which did not license school-age child care): Arkansas, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland.

ADAPTING CHILD-CARE REGULATIONS FOR GREATER APPLICABILITY TO SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS

By 1988, more than half the state licensing agencies had begun to modify group day-care regulations to take into account the needs of school-age children. Of the 44 states reporting, we found that five had developed separate sets of regulations specifically for school-age child care: California, Colorado, Massachusetts, New York (also New York City), and North Carolina.

In addition, 18 states had adapted their regulations in ways that we judged to be significant, particularly with regard to program activities and staff qualifications. However, there were many other noteworthy changes. For instance, Alaska required separate space for school-agers, and stipulated that children must be involved in planning activities, which should not duplicate the school day. Montana said school-agers should be able to leave programs to participate in other activities, and that children should help make program rules. Utah required a procedure for allowing children to depart on their own. Oklahoma required

furniture, equipment, and supplies appropriate to the age group, and "relaxation time" for school-agers.

The remaining 21 had made changes we judged to be of little significance, or had done nothing other than set different staff/child ratios for school-age groups. It should be noted that, in some cases, programs receiving funding were subject to extra requirements. For instance, in Indiana, no significant revisions of the group day-care regulations had been made for the licensing of school-age child care, but programs getting funds through the state's "latchkey bill" were subject to requirements written specifically for school-age programs. In California, programs getting money through the Child Development Division were subject to a quality review in addition to the school-age child-care regulations of the Community Care Licensing Division.

Table 3: Status of Day Care Regulations for Programs Serving School-Age Children, 1988

STATES WITH:

Separate regulations	Significant adaptations	Few adaptations
California	Alaska	Alabama
Colorado	Arizona	Connecticut
Massachusetts	Delaware	Idaho
New York	Hawaii	Indiana
New York City	Illinois	Iowa
North Carolina	Kansas	Kentucky
	Michigan	Maine
	Minnesota	Nebraska
	Missouri	Nevada
	Montana	New Mexico
	New Hampshire	North Dakota
	Oklahoma	Ohio
	Oregon	Pennsylvania
	Rhode Island	Rhode Island
	Tennessee	South Carolina
	Utah	South Dakota
	Vermont	Texas
	Wisconsin	Virginia
		Washington
		West Virginia
		Wyoming

Missing (other than Mississippi and New Jersey): Arkansas, District of Columbia, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland.

WHO LICENSES WHOM?

Identifying which providers of school-age child care were subject to licensing and by whom, and then comparing across states, produced interesting results. For instance, as noted earlier, New York City had regulations distinct from the state's, with a different agency bearing responsibility. Similarly, Baltimore had regulations distinct from Maryland's. In Idaho, three cities were responsible for their own licensing, while in Nevada, four cities and counties had that responsibility -- but using the same standards as the rest of the state. Programs outside the jurisdiction of state governments -- principally on Indian reservations and military bases -- were also not subject to state regulation.

INSTITUTIONAL AS WELL AS GEOGRAPHICAL TURF

Geographical turf was but one element of regulatory complexity. Institutional turf was even more of a factor. Most, but not all, states exempted from licensing programs under the administration of school boards. This did not apply, however, to programs administered by third parties housed in schools. The exceptions to the public school exemption were Colorado, Idaho, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, New York state, North Carolina, Tennessee and Vermont, all of which licensed school-run programs in 1988. In addition, Wisconsin required schools to meet the same standards applied to everyone else, even though they were exempt from licensing. In the state of Washington, public school-run programs wishing to receive state subsidies had to be certified as meeting all licensing requirements.

A few states exempted other public entities besides schools from regulations (e.g. Alaska, municipalities; city of Baltimore, department of recreation; New York City, programs funded by the Youth Bureau; Missouri and Virginia, all public agencies). Vermont exempted any programs which charged no fees and were fully supported by taxes.

A number of states created exempt categories for private organizations offering school-age child care. Most commonly, private and religious schools were exempt, sometimes providing they enrolled only their own regular day-students in their before- and after-school programs. North Carolina handled church-run programs the same way Wisconsin handled public schools, requiring compliance

with regulations without formal licensing. New Mexico, uniquely, exempted programs run by what it called "recognized organizations" such as the Girl Scouts. Missouri exempted hospitals and any programs licensed by the Department of Mental Health. Hawaii was the only state with an exemption for the YMCA and YWCA.

DEFINITION AND SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Besides geographical boundaries and institutional types, issues of times of operation and definition of services entered into deciding which programs were to be licensed. Many states exempted programs operating fewer than a specified number of hours per day (e.g. Indiana, under four hours) or a specified number of weeks per year (e.g. Michigan, under two weeks). Some states exempted summer camps, since there were other regulations governing their conduct. The state of New York exempted programs operating fewer than 15 hours per week -- unless they wanted to receive referrals from the Department of Social Services, in which case they had to be licensed.

Licensing officials in 22 of 45 states responding reported much confusion over whether certain types of programs were licensable; most often, these were drop-in recreational programs, summer camps and "school vacation-week camps." Occasionally, enrichment classes "that last all day and behave like child care," as an Alaska official put it, created confusion. An Idaho official reported a similar problem with ski resorts offering child care. In both New Hampshire and South Dakota, the attorney general's office had been asked to give a legal opinion on what constituted licensable school-age child care; likewise, Oklahoma was surveying summer programs and asking legal counsel to clarify the matter.

WHAT EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS KNEW ABOUT SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE

As with licensing agencies, there were great variations in what education departments knew about school-age child care at the school district level. Some knew only about programs in school districts receiving financial support from the state. Some knew only about programs under the direct administration of boards of education (including community education). Others knew which districts were running programs, which were making space available for other organizations, and how many school sites were involved in each district. Compared to the child-care

licensing agencies, a high number were able to give estimates on the numbers of children attending programs.

The percentage of school districts either directly providing school-age child care or providing space for programs, ranged, in 38 responding states, from zero to 84 percent. Florida, with 56 of 67 districts involved, was at the high end (84 percent), followed by North Carolina (51 percent; 71 of 140) and Connecticut (48 percent; 76 of 159). At the low end, the education departments of Idaho and Montana reported that no school districts were either running programs themselves or in partnership with other providers. (Washington, D.C., and Hawaii, each with only one school district, are not included for this comparison.)

Of the 25 states able to estimate the enrollment capacities of their district-run programs, Florida had by far the highest; approximately 34,000 children in 488 public schools. Next came Alabama, with 8,744 in 186 schools, and Minnesota, with 7,000 in 150 schools. Of the 20 states able to estimate the capacities of partnership programs, the education department of Tennessee reported the highest number; 7,721 in 132 schools. Next came Connecticut, with 7,500 in 179 schools, Pennsylvania, with 5,685 in 133 schools, and Hawaii, with 4,000 in 76 schools.

It should be noted that states were asked to provide "best guess" estimates if they did not have actual data; the tables below give the numbers from all responding states, whether derived from surveys or guesswork.

STATE INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL-RUN AND SCHOOL-PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

In very few states were both district-run and partnership models taking root with equal strength. Although the two existed side-by-side in most states, there seemed almost everywhere to be a definite tendency toward one and away from the other.

For instance, in Alabama, where 42 districts were running programs themselves, the education department knew of only four with partnership programs. Minnesota had 59 districts running programs and eight playing host to partner organizations. Ohio had 77 districts running programs and five with partnerships.

On the other hand, all 76 programs in Hawaii were run by partner agencies. Connecticut had two districts running programs and approximately 74 with

partnership arrangements. In New Hampshire, six districts were running programs, while 28 others were known to be involved in partnerships.

There were, however, a few states where there seemed to be more parallel development, in which neither model greatly predominated. Among these were Missouri, Tennessee, Florida, and Illinois.

Table 4: Current levels of public school involvement in school-age child care through school district-run programs, reported by education departments, 1988

State	Districts running SACC/ Total districts in state	No. schools w/SACC	Capacity
AL	42/130	186	8744
AK	8/55	28	800
AR	3/330	30	1200
CT	2/159	5	150
DE	1/19	2	80
DC	0/1	0	0
FL	37/67	488	34,000
GA	5/186	20	500
HI	0/1	0	0
ID	0/116	0	0
IL	17/982	unknown	unknown
IA	15/435	100	2000
MN	59/435	150	7000
MS	13/152	15	550
MO	18/545	30	unknown
MT	0/546	0	0
NE	8/900	25	50
NV	0/17	0	0
NH	6/154	13	156
NC	71/140	92	unknown
OH	77/615	113	3358
OR	1/281	7	200
PA	23/504	29	1000
RI	0/39	0	0
TN	11/142	26	1050
TX	0/1093	0	0
UT	1/39	1	30
VT	2/59	2	94
WV	8/55	20	500

Note: Numbers in this table include all those reported by states, whether actual data or "best guesses."

Table 5: Current levels of public school involvement in school-age child care through partnerships (programs housed in, not run by, public schools), reported by education departments, 1988.

State	Districts w/partnerships/ Total districts in state	No. schools w/SACC	Capacity
AL	4/130	unknown	600
AK	2/55	6	300
AR	2/330	1	300
CT	74/159	179	7500
DE	5/19	17	325
DC	1/1	38	1931
FL	19/67	unknown	unknown
GA	5/186	10	200
HI	1/1	76	4000
ID	0/116	0	0
IA	3/435	12	250
IL	55/982	unknown	unknown
MS	0/152	0	0
MO	18/545	35	unknown
MT	0/546	0	0
NE	1/900	10	300
NH	28/154	67	709
OH	5/615	10	297
OR	16/281	75	2300
PA	83/504	133	5685
TN	10/142	132	7721
UT	4/392	28	1565
VT	20/59	22	582

Note: Numbers in this table include all those reported by states, whether actual data or "best guesses."

DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMS IN AND OUTSIDE SCHOOLS: A CLOSE LOOK AT THREE STATES

Of the four states identified earlier whose licensing agencies were able to report actual licensed capacity for center-based programs of all types, three also had education departments able to provide hard numbers. These were Ohio, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Only in these three, therefore, can we examine in some detail the overall development of center-based school-age child care, and gauge how much of it is provided in schools (whether run by them or not) or in other locations.

Table 6: Capacity in school-based (partnership or school-run) school-age child care as a percentage of the total capacity for center-based school-age child care, three states with useable data

State	School-based capacity	Licensed capacity	Total capacity	School-based as percent
Ohio	3655	27,037	30,395	12 percent
New Hampshire	865	796	952	91 percent
Vermont	676	1856	1856	36 percent

As the table illustrates, there was wide variation from state to state. In New Hampshire, nearly all licensed capacity was in public schools. The largest number of slots (709 of 796) were in public school partnership programs. Putting this together with 156 slots in the (non-licensed) school-run programs, care in schools accounted for 865 out of a total capacity of 952, or 91 percent. There were, according to these figures, only 87 school-age children, or 9 percent of the total, attending center-based programs outside the schools.

Contrast this to the picture in Ohio. There, although 77 school districts were running programs and five others had partnerships, the combined total capacity of these programs was only 12 percent of the capacity for center-based programs statewide. The other 88 percent of school-agers, according to these figures, were attending center-based programs somewhere other than in schools.

Vermont fell between these two extremes, with about 36 percent of its center-based capacity lying in the schools. Note that in Vermont, the school-run programs were licensed, so the number displayed under "Total capacity" is the same as the number displayed under "Licensed capacity."

It is very hard to draw conclusions from looking at data from three states. Perhaps most instructive is the fact that New Hampshire and Vermont, which are neighbors and not radically different in population or demographics, showed very different trends in the development of school-age child care.

It is also noteworthy that in Ohio, a state where the education department had for several years been promoting school district-run programs, and had succeeded in getting 113 schools in 77 districts to implement them, schools were still at least several years away from being the leading providers of care to school-age children.

SUMMING UP: A TOP-DOWN VIEW OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE

We conducted our survey during a period when the school-age child-care field was obviously in flux. Many managers of state agencies said they were aware of problems caused by their lack of knowledge about numbers of programs and children served. Some told us that as a result of our queries, they were beginning to conduct surveys or reassess the way they organized and reported data.

Many states were reexamining regulations when we surveyed them in 1988. Many of the states listed in Table 3 as having no regulations for school-age child care or "few adaptations" will have released new regulations by the time this paper is published, or will have established task forces to work on them.

Even some of the those states with "significant adaptations" were planning to make refinements. The fact that so many (just over half) of the licensing agencies said there were problems in defining licensable school-age child care emphasized that this area of regulation was still in its infancy.

Many states had begun to ensure minimum standards for programs exempt from regulation; specifically, public schools. Some states which did not license public school-run programs were developing guidelines parallel to licensing standards, to be implemented through the education departments.

One state, Tennessee, which did license public schools in 1988, was considering a change to a model of regulation by the education department instead. Another, Kentucky, was looking at encouraging public school programs to submit voluntarily to licensing. Meanwhile, the branches of the military, all exempt from state regulation, were developing and tightening their own child-development and youth-activities guidelines for school-age child-care programming.

Both our qualitative and quantitative findings were enriched by interviews conducted with some respondents involved in policy development and implementation. We learned from them that in a number of states, Dependent Care Grants, allocated by the federal government beginning in 1985, generated the first real focus on school-age child care.

We also learned that where the Dependent Care Grant monies were lodged made a great deal of difference at the grass roots. For instance, designation of education departments as the locus of the grants often led more directly to involvement of school districts in school-age child care. We were also told that in an increasing number of states, advocacy coalitions and provider organizations

were playing a major role in determining the direction of public funding, training, and policy development.

The clearest consensus in our interviews was on the greatest obstacle to continued expansion of school-age child care. Nearly all respondents said that the need for public funding to cover care, not just start-up costs, was the biggest problem. They said that a lack of public funding leaves urban and rural areas with low-income populations behind the more affluent suburbs in the expansion of programs.

The next most frequently cited concern was the difficulty of finding and keeping qualified and competent staff, because of the irregular hours and low pay usually offered.

The numbers of programs and children served were clearly growing rapidly. Even most of the licensing agencies and education departments which had no data were able to substantiate that. It appears that with increasing attention being paid to school-age child care, two predictions can safely be made: In five or 10 years, anyone posing the questions at the beginning of this paper will find many more states able to supply answers; and, the numbers of programs and children served will be a great deal higher than they are today.

But will there be more equitable access to programs in areas with large numbers of low-income children? And will programs by then find they are able to attract and retain competent, committed professionals? These questions will only be answered by seeing how school-age child care, along with child care in general, fares in the public policy sphere.

THE PROVIDER SURVEY

WHAT WE SOUGHT FROM THE PROVIDERS

Our research from the "bottom up" complemented and amplified our state survey.

While the states told us (to the extent they could) how many programs there were and how much capacity they had, the providers in our sample told us not only how many school-age children they served, but also their ages and ethnic and demographic origins.

While the states told us which categories of providers were required to be licensed, and specified the minimum requirements for staffing ratios and other regulatory concerns, the providers told us whether they were currently licensed, and by whom, and the actual working ratios and staff qualifications with which they functioned day-to-day with different age groups.

Where the education departments told us how many school districts were involved in school-age child care, the providers described the quality of their relationships with school personnel.

In sum, while the states gave us a national overview, the providers gave us detailed descriptions of the actual services being delivered by a spectrum of different types of center-based programs in six different areas. In addition, our sample of 130 providers gave us information on facilities, activities, salaries, staff turnover, sources of funding, fees, parental involvement, program budgets, schedules of operations, enrollment criteria, involvement in evaluation, accreditation, monitoring, and many other topics.

Our provider questionnaire was adapted by Fern Marx from a survey developed for the Community Service Society of New York City. The survey was conducted by Fern Marx and Michelle Seligson for the School-Age Child Care Project.

The survey solicited voluntary participation from providers in six geographical areas: two states, one portion of a state, and three combinations of contiguous states. These were: 1. Southern California; 2. Northwest (Oregon, Washington); 3. Minnesota; 4. Illinois; 5. Southeast (Florida, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia); and 6. Northeast (Pennsylvania, New Jersey).

We deliberately selected areas that represented somewhat different organizational development within school-age child care. As is indicated in the table below, public school districts were the predominant provider of care in the Minnesota sample, and were also heavily represented in southern California; youth agencies (YMCA and YWCA) were more prevalent in the Northeast sample than in other parts of the country; for-profit programs were somewhat more common in the Southeast; while church and religious-school programs and nonprofit agencies were fairly evenly dispersed throughout the six areas.

Other types of programs were also represented, but in very small numbers: those run by municipalities, the military, universities, and social agencies. We also sought a mixture of urban, suburban and rural programs; in the end, we had just 14 rural programs (12 percent of the sample), mostly located in Pennsylvania and Oregon. The other programs in the study broke down as 53 percent suburban and 36 percent urban.

Table 7: An overview of surveyed programs by type of organization (what agency administers the program)

CHILD CARE ORGANIZATIONS		48
nonprofit	29	
for-profit	19	
PUBLIC SCHOOLS		32
OTHER TYPES OF ORGANIZATIONS		50
YMCA, YWCA	18	
religious school or church	16	
higher education	2	
military	2	
municipality*	8	
social agency	4	

* Includes 6 recreation and park departments

Table 8: An overview of surveyed programs by geographical area

NORTHEAST			34
	New Jersey	17	
	Pennsylvania	17	
ILLINOIS			18
MINNESOTA			19
SOUTHEAST			26
	Florida	14	
	North Carolina	4	
	South Carolina	2	
	Georgia	2	
	Alabama	1	
	Tennessee	3	
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA			13
NORTHWEST			20
	Oregon	6	
	Washington	14	

Our hope was that the sample -- somewhat balanced in terms of different geographical areas and types of organization -- would enable us to identify trends in program operation and development, and associate them with the region or type of organization. Our data did indeed yield findings in this regard, particularly on organizations; less so on regions. However, all the trends identified must be taken as suggestive, since the sample was entirely self-selected.

HISTORY AND SCOPE OF OPERATIONS

Programs responding to our survey began operations an average of seven years before 1988. The oldest program began in 1953; the youngest in 1988; 44 percent had started since 1984. An even higher 55 percent of the public school district-run programs had opened since 1984. This data parallels the observations made about education departments and licensing agencies -- that in most states, the rapid expansion of the field in recent years had far outpaced changes in regulation and data-gathering.

The vast majority of programs were offering far more than the minimal "after-school" hours at one time commonplace. There were 97 programs, or 75 percent of the sample, offering both before- and after-school care. There were 105, 81 percent of the total, providing care on a year-round basis. All of the 14 rural programs were in this category. The most common closing time for programs was 6 p.m., with 76 percent of the national sample closing then.

The 127 providers responding to a question about the number of sites they operated at, were offering care at 480 sites. While 60 percent of the child-care organizations (for-profit or nonprofit) and 95 percent of church and religious school-affiliated programs had only one site, 90 percent of public school-run programs had multiple sites, as did 76 percent of the YMCA/YWCA programs. A higher proportion of programs in the rural sample (77 percent) operated at multiple sites than in the suburban (56 percent) or urban (53 percent) samples.

Almost the entire sample (93 percent) began serving school-agers at kindergarten age; only nine programs (7 percent) reported that they started enrollment at age 6. Only a few programs (9 percent) served children above the age of 12; 72 percent set either 11 or 12 as their upper age limit, while a few others set ages as young as 8. However, the numbers of children actually enrolled diminished greatly almost everywhere above age 9, and rapidly so above age 11.

The licensed capacity reported ranged from six to 348. The average program capacity was 63; the actual current enrollment of children ages 5 through 12 averaged 61. The median licensed capacity was 49; the median number actually enrolled was 50. Only 28 percent of the sample reported enrollment of 30 or fewer, with 35 percent reporting enrollment of 31 to 60, 23 percent reporting enrollment of 61 to 100, and 14 percent reporting enrollment greater than 100.

The number of staff reported ranged from one to 35. Some 35 percent of the programs employed five or fewer staff; 67 percent employed 10 or fewer; and 89 percent employed 20 or fewer. The mean number employed was 10; the median was seven. On average, directors worked 37 hours per week and 48 weeks per year, while at the other end of the hierarchy, aides worked an average of 22 hours per week and 45 weeks per year.

RATIOS OF CARE-GIVERS TO CHILDREN

Our survey of state licensing agencies showed that relatively few states required better than a ratio of one care-giver to 15 6-year-olds; however, the sample reported an average of 1:12.5 for 6- and 7-year-olds, with no significant differences among rural, urban, and suburban locations. This could mean, of course, that soliciting voluntary participation brought responses from programs with better than average ratios. It may also reflect that these were self-reported, not observed care-giving ratios.

There were two groups of programs within the sample subject to licensing requirements of better than 1:15. These were those in Pennsylvania, where the requirement was 1:12, and southern California, where it was 1:14. At the other end of the regulatory spectrum, the Southeast sample (except for one Alabama program, subject to a 1:20 requirement) consisted of programs all located in states with a 1:25 ratio requirement.

Pennsylvania programs reported the lowest average ratios of any state in our study (1:10.8). Florida (at 1:14.2) and the other Southeastern states (at 1:14.6) reported the highest average ratios. The southern California programs showed up at about the mid-range of the sample, with an average 1:12.6.

Examining ratios by type of organization, YMCA/YWCA programs reported the best average, of 1:10.2. Next came municipalities (mostly recreation and park departments) at 1:10.8, and nonprofit child-care agencies at 1:12.5. All other types were clustered between 1:13.1 and 1:13.5.

PARENT FEES

Many programs offered discounted fees for children on subsidy, for families with more than one child in the program, or for those using care less often than every day. They also charged extra in many cases for kindergartners who needed more hours of care, and for before-school and vacation days.

The fees examined here are those for families paying the unsubsidized rate for one child attending after-school only, five days a week, on regular school days. The average fee in the sample for this service was $26.52 per week. Rural providers charged much less than urban and suburban programs; an average of $20.08 a week, compared to $26.53 for the suburban and $27.57 for urban programs.

The range of fees was from $10.00 to $55.00 a week. Only 26 percent of programs charged more than $30.00 a week at the time of the survey. It should be noted that while weekly fees were the most common, some providers charged by the month, by the semester, by the day, or by the hour. In these cases we translated the fees into weekly equivalents.

Table 9: Parental fees by type of organization, based on 1988 fee for one child, unsubsidized, attending five days a week, after school on regular school days

Number	Organization	Fee per week, 5 days after school
19	Child care for-profit	$29.11
29	Child care nonprofit	$25.52
16	Religious affiliated	$28.81
30	Public schools	$25.30
7	Municipalities	$19.29
18	YMCA/YWCA	$27.56
6	Other	$28.50
125	Overall average	$26.52

By type of organization, the least expensive programs were those run by municipalities (mostly recreation and park departments), which charged an average of $19.29 a week. For-profit child-care agencies, religiously affiliated programs, and military, university, and social agencies reported the highest average weekly fees, but these differences were not found to be statistically significant.

By geographical area, Washington state and southern California programs charged the most, averaging $34.85 and $34.18 a week respectively. At the opposite end of the scale, programs in Oregon charged half as much: an average of $17.33 a week. In light of the differential between rural fees and the others, this is not surprising; the small Oregon sample consisted almost entirely of rural programs. All other geographical areas included in the sample averaged between $23.41 and $26.65 a week.

COMPENSATION

Urban and suburban teachers were paid considerably better than those in rural areas, but still suffered from the general low pay endemic to American child care. While the average hourly wage for teachers was $7.24 in suburban programs and $7.12 in urban programs, it was $5.97 in rural programs.

Table 10: Average hourly wages of teachers in school-age child-care programs by type of organization, 1988, 88 programs reporting

Public school-run	$9.36
Municipalities	$8.32
Nonprofit child care	$6.95
Other	$6.24
YMCA/YWCA	$6.16
Religious affiliated	$5.78
For-profit child care	$4.90
Overall average	$6.95

As indicated in the table above, an examination of teachers' wages by type of organization yielded revealing differences. The public school district-run programs paid teachers the highest average wages: $9.36. The municipalities were next at $8.32. At the low end were the for-profits, paying teachers an average of $4.90 an hour, almost a dollar per hour less than the church/religious-school programs, which paid the second lowest at $5.78 per hour.

Looking at wages across regions, as indicated in the table below, there were also some strong tendencies. Providers in Florida ($4.95) and the other Southeastern states ($4.45) paid the lowest average wages to teachers. At the high end were New Jersey programs ($9.51), Minnesota programs ($8.10) and southern California programs ($7.65).

Table 11: Average hourly wages of teachers in school-age child-care programs by geographical area, 1988, 88 programs reporting

New Jersey	$9.51
Minnesota	$8.10
Southern California	$7.65
Illinois	$6.45
Pennsylvania	$6.18
Washington	$5.98
Oregon	$5.06
Florida	$4.95
Southeast (other than Florida)	$4.45
Overall average	$6.95

It should be noted that the average wages of all care-givers in these programs would be considerably lower than the figures given here for teachers. The majority of programs had a number of other care-giving staff below the position of teacher (and only a few above); there were such positions as aides, assistant teachers, group leaders, and a variety of other titles, which were generally placed lower on the salary schedule than those labelled teacher. The following table, which projects average annual salaries based on the average hourly wages, number of hours per week and weeks worked per year reported by the providers, helps to illustrate this.

Table 12: Approximate average annual salary, by position, in school-age child-care programs, 1988

Center director	$18,879
Program director	$15,996
Teacher	$9,431
Group leader	$5,630
Aide	$4,960
Assistant teacher	$4,858

BENEFITS

While 72 percent of programs offered some kinds of benefits to staff, great variations between programs made it difficult to identify general trends.

One finding was that, on average, child-care organizations offered better benefits than either public schools or other types. For instance, paid vacation time was offered by 80 percent of child-care organizations, 71 percent of other types, and 44 percent of public schools. Paid holidays were offered by 49 percent of child-care organizations, 22 percent of public schools, and 13 percent of the others. On the other hand, half of the public schools offered dental benefits, while less than a quarter of child-care organizations or other types did.

Of the 32 public school-run programs, only seven reported that they paid school-age child-care employees salaries comparable to their other employees, while 17 reported that their benefits were comparable. Of the entire sample, only 14 programs (11 percent) reported that employees belonged to a union or a bargaining unit.

QUALIFICATIONS AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

To fill their teaching positions, programs established a wide range of educational qualifications. Of the 82 programs that used the job title "teacher" and gave us information on requirements for this position, there were approximately equal numbers whose minimal requirements were a high school diploma (31 percent), two years of college (31 percent) or a bachelor's degree (38 percent).

The 41 programs that hired "group leaders" instead of or in addition to teachers generally required less formal education: 58 percent required a high school diploma. The 79 programs that hired "aides" or "assistant teachers" seldom (4 percent) required more than a high school diploma.

As for formal certification, over four-fifths (82 percent) of public schools required some kind of certification for teachers. This was true of 58 percent of the child-care organizations and only 33 percent of the other types. Forms of certification recognized besides formal teaching credentials were social work, and early childhood, administrative, and child development associate certification.

A total of 125 programs, or 97 percent of the sample, reported some types of staff training opportunities. In general, child-care organizations and public schools provided more opportunities than other types of programs.

The most common staff development benefit (79 percent) was reimbursement for attendance at professional conferences. Approximately half the programs provided pre-service and/or in-service training, and approximately half reported visits by staff to other school-age child-care sites as part of their staff development activity. Just 43 percent of programs provided some reimbursement for relevant course work. Here public schools (33 percent) were less generous than programs run by child-care organizations or the other types in the sample.

Staff meetings were held by practically the entire sample (93 percent). However, less than half (45 percent) held such meetings at least once every two weeks, and there were many differences in practice according to type of organization. Nonprofit child-care programs were the most likely (57 percent) to meet once a week. YMCA/YWCA programs usually met once every two weeks, and the religious schools and churches usually met only monthly.

STAFF TURNOVER

Of our 130 programs, 85 percent reported some staff turnover within the previous year. The average turnover was four. Recall that the average number employed in these programs was 10, that translates to a 40 percent annual rate of turnover for those who had any turnover at all. YMCA/YWCA programs appeared to have slightly higher turnover than the average.

USE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND OTHER FACILITIES

Public schools were the most frequently mentioned site for programs. Not only did nearly all (94 percent) of the school-run programs operate at public school sites, but 24 percent of all other programs did also.

The use of public schools for school-age child care was not associated with urban programs; 36 percent of the rural sample used public schools, while 41 percent of both suburban and urban programs did. Five of the six municipal recreation and park departments in the sample were operating their programs in public schools, as well as 10 of the 29 nonprofit child-care centers, six of the 18 youth agencies, and four of the 19 for-profit providers. There were no religiously affiliated programs housed in public school facilities.

Those programs not operated in public schools were usually operated in private buildings (23 percent), church facilities (15 percent), or community center or YMCA/YWCA buildings (12 percent).

A large majority of the sample (70 percent) reported that they had access to more than one primary space for the daily use of their program, but a sizable minority (30 percent) reported that they were operating primarily in one large room.

For-profit child care centers (50 percent) were the most likely to be utilizing just one large room. Programs housed in community centers, religious buildings and other facilities were more likely to have access to multiple primary spaces than those in public schools or private buildings. More than two-fifths (42 percent) of the programs in public schools were using just one primary space.

We found that 95 percent of programs had some access to spaces other than their primary space. Most frequently these were playgrounds (97 percent of those who had access to other spaces) and gyms (51 percent). We also found 23 percent

reporting use of a library, 11 percent using an art room, 11 percent using a swimming pool, 5 percent using a computer room, and 4 percent using a kitchen. It was public school-run programs that tended to have access to gyms and libraries, and YMCAs and YWCAs were most likely to have the use of swimming pools.

About 50 percent of the sample reported making regular use of facilities other than their own. The programs housed in public schools, which tended to have more access to varied rooms within their own facility, reported lower use (32 percent) of community facilities than other groups. The church/religious-school-based programs were the most frequent (70 percent) users of community facilities. Public parks were used by 58 percent of those who used any community facilities; 38 percent used public swimming pools, 19 percent used libraries, 14 percent used public skating rinks, and small numbers listed Boys' and Girls' Clubs, art centers, bowling alleys, and other places.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Our sample reported nearly universal inclusion (from 85 percent to 100 percent) of certain programming elements: arts and crafts, free time, quiet time, reading, athletics, homework help, and field trips.

Next most commonly offered (by 60 percent to 79 percent of the sample) were cooking or snack preparation, safety education, music, group discussions, educational enrichment, and health/nutrition activities.

About 45 percent cited dance as one of their activities; one-third identified theater; and fewer than 10 percent identified such things as foreign language, gymnastics/aerobics, and computers.

Remedial education, which was only offered by 12 percent of the sample, was more likely to be reported among the offerings of for-profit child-care centers. The same goes for tutoring, which was offered by 25 percent of the sample. The 32 public school district programs in the sample did not show a bias toward tutoring, remedial education, or educational enrichment, but did report more music, dance, theater, and cooking than other types of programs.

How did children end up in the various activities? Providers told us that free choice was the most common method (39 percent), with a balance of free choice and assigned activities (31 percent) following close behind. It appeared that about 6 percent of programs gave children no opportunity for choice. Child-care

organizations were the most likely (49 percent) of all types to report free choice as the way activities were commonly selected.

In addition to children making choices from planned activities (39 percent), some programs (14 percent) also allowed children to opt out of planned activities. These tended to be child-care organizations more than public schools or others. A minority of programs set aside regular free choice time (31 percent). Child-care organizations (58 percent) and those in the "other" category (61 percent) were far more likely than public schools (26 percent) to set aside free time for self-directed activities.

Most of those in the sample reported that they developed different activities for different age groups, but it was not easy to identify trends. In 21 percent of programs, older children had their own space or equipment. In 12 percent, older children were in a separate group, or were members of an older-kids' club. Public school programs reported more distinct activities for older children than other types of programs.

Of 112 programs responding, 56 percent said there were additional activities they felt the program should be offering to meet the needs of children. The kinds most frequently cited as lacking (24 percent) were physical activities. In general, child-care organizations were less likely to say that there were elements missing from their programs than public schools or others.

EVALUATION, ACCREDITATION AND WHAT PROVIDERS WANT TO CHANGE

Forty-six programs (36 percent) reported having received some kind of formal evaluation. Nearly half of these 46 (45 percent) reported they had been evaluated by state agencies, while the second most common response (23 percent) was that they had been through the accreditation process of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Public school programs were exempt from licensing in all of the states in our provider survey except for Tennessee, thus it is not surprising that only 27 percent of public school programs had been evaluated by a state agency. However, public school programs were more likely to have received the NAEYC accreditation than others; 43 percent of our public school sample had been through this process.

Although the National Academy of Early Childhood (which handles accreditation) was launched by the NAEYC as recently as 1986, 84 percent of our

sample said in 1988 that they knew about the NAEYC or "other organizational accreditation." It appeared from comments that most of the "other organizational accreditation" referred to was actually the NAEYC's. All told, 37 percent of the sample either had already received, had applied for, or was intending to apply for some kind of accreditation, 90 percent specifying the NAEYC's.

As to the greatest source of pride for the providers, the quality of staff was mentioned by 21 respondents, far more than any other single answer. When we asked what they would like to do differently, a relatively large number (six) mentioned "more money to pay staff what they truly deserve."

At least six respondents mentioned problems of transportation. More staff (and more hours for staff) to improve the ratios of care-givers to children was mentioned by eight respondents.

On the positive side, more than half the providers, when asked what they took pride in, mentioned aspects of programming directly related to children, from "the rapport between children and staff," to "lasting friendships among children," to the fact that children were "happy and enjoy coming," to specific curriculum components, such as outdoor education, weekly theme days, and a summer music program.

A VIEW OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE FROM THE BOTTOM UP

A picture of the provision of school-age child care emerges from this national sample that has significant positive features. The field appears to have rapidly evolved to come to terms with the need for care not only after school, but before school and also during vacations and holidays.

The reported care-giving ratios, averaging between 1:12 and 1:13, were excellent, particularly in light of regulatory requirements which allowed much lower ratios in most states. Also, the apparent commitment by a relatively large number of programs (although not a majority) to nurture children's need for increased autonomy during the non-school hours was an important indicator of quality.

Likewise, the arrangements made by a significant minority of those surveyed to provide separate space and equipment or to constitute separate "clubs" for older children was an indicator of quality. The widespread knowledge and use of NAEYC accreditation clearly implied involvement in the broader child care and early childhood community and an increasing commitment to quality and professionalism.

On the down side are the low levels of compensation and benefits. As in the child-care field as a whole, we found relatively high expectations of education and certification going hand-in-hand with wages that could not long sustain an individual, let alone a family. This apparently accounted in large measure for the high turnover rates we found. High turnover acts as a barrier to the professionalization of the field and the development of quality.

Aside from the lack of adequate compensation, there were other areas of concern brought into focus by the survey results:

The large numbers of programs (30 percent of the sample) which operated principally in only one large room, and the 50 percent which made no use of community facilities outside their own buildings, may indicate lost opportunities for children, who could benefit greatly from access to more diversified space and to involvement in community activities. This interpretation is supported by the fact that many providers indicated "physical activities" as a perceived gap in their programs, implying that children may be too confined.

The fact that only 45 percent of programs held staff meetings at least once every two weeks is also cause for concern. School-age child-care staff work much more in teams than do teachers in school settings, and a failure to hold frequent

meetings may impede the development of teamwork, which can lead to a lowering of morale and increased turnover.

CONCLUSION

The response to our survey of state licensing agencies and education departments demonstrated that many were not yet closely monitoring and collecting data on the development of school-age child care. Our sample of 130 providers told us, among other things, that most of them had not existed before the 1980s. This rapid growth in the field helps to explain why so many of the state agencies had not yet developed the capacity to track and monitor these programs.

Our interviews with respondents involved in developing and implementing policy also made it clear that, in most places, they were only just beginning to get a handle on the many facets of this issue. Yet there were a few licensing agencies and a larger number of the education departments that had very accurate and up-to-date information, and this should not go unnoticed.